Telephone connections in Kashmir

197. SHRI GHULAM RASOOL KAR : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that most of the colonies in Kashmir are still deprived of the telephone facilities ; and

(b) whether Government propose to consider providing special Exchange facilities in all these new housing colonies ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (*SHRI RAM* NIWAS MIRDHA) : (a) No, Sir. Telephone connections have been given in housing colonies to the extent of available capacities in exchanges.

(b) Provision of new exchanges to meet the registered demand is being taken up during the 7th Plan subject to availability of resources.

Telephone connections between Delhi and Sopore town in Kashmir

198. SHRI GHULAM RASOOL KAR : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Sopore Town (Kashmir) was recently connected with Haryana only by Microwave system;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Sopore Town is the main producer of fruit in Kashmir; and

(c) if so, why Sopore Town was not directly connected with Delhi by Microwave system as Delhi is the main selling mandi of such fruit ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA) : (a) No, Sir. Sopore has been connected to the Trunk Automatic Exchange at Jammu which has access to selected stations in Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and J&K States.

(b) Yes, Sir. Sopore is one of the main centres in Kashmir for apple fruits during the season.

(c) Sopore will have access to Delhi *via* Jammu TAX soon after Jammu TAX is connected to Delhi TAX for which work is in progress.

Bonus to casual workers of P and T Department

200. SHRI SURAJ PRASAD : SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) why the daily rated casual Workers of P&T Department are not being paid bonus ;

(b) whether it is a fact that at Patna such casual workers have launched a boycott week ; and

(c) if so, what steps Government have taken to meet their grievances?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA) (a) The P&T Department has been paying PLB to all casual labourers who have worked for at least 240 days for each year for 3 years or more, as per terms of agreement with the staff unions.

(b) Information is being collected.

(c) Does not arise in view of (a) above.